

Odd object training - generally - involves exercise using heavy 'found objects' or implements that you can modify for strength training. Many odd objects such as Atlas stones have been traditionally used as part of strongman training. This type of exercise is nothing new, but it has been coming back into favor recently. An odd object is a non-rigid implement with a center of mass that is not fixed. In conventional strength training, the pattern of movement is fixed, whereas the load given by odd objects will cause adjustments during the movement. Some label this style of training 'real world training', and odd objects certainly have benefits, including versatility, portability, and simplicity. The only limit is your own creativity, as well!

Odd object training used to be done because there were no other options - people either had no access to special equipment, or it simply had not been invented yet. Many old school strongmen also became very well known for using rather heavy odd or awkward objects. Such objects include kegs, anvils, Atlas stones, medicine balls, and sandbags. In this modern era, with all of the scientifically designed equipment and training routines that we can get access to, we can still benefit from odd object training. An increasingly popular philosophy of training - Dinosaur Training - promotes returning to the exercises and training of strongmen.

I have personally found that working with odd objects and the exercises I have discovered for them have helped with coordination, wrist and forearm strength, and more. I ended up getting into this kind of training as a result of reading about the old school strongmen in the Convict Conditioning books written by Paul 'Coach' Wade, as well as reading about the ancient training methods of Okinawan karate in the book 'The Art of Hojo Undo: Power Training for Traditional Karate' by Michael Clarke. The book Overcoming Gravity - written by Steven Low - focuses on basic gymnastics progressions for building strength. Many old school strongmen were capable of great feats of not only strength, but skill and balance. Let's remember that it takes strength to hold many of the positions in gymnastics. As such, I recommend these books very highly. Like with odd object training, the types of training these books describe help a lot with neuromuscular strength and efficiency, musculoskeletal strength, coordination, and more.

On the next page, I recommend some odd objects and other implements that I prefer to use, as well as alternative methodologies. I realize that this is far from a comprehensive treatment on the subject. As such, I do list my primary references at the end of the document and highly recommend that you visit them for plenty more exercises and ideas on constructing your own routines. Also, check out my blog regarding odd object training for links to YouTube playlists about this kind of training and hojo undo -

<http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

Don't forget to check out the video playlists linked at the top of this blog, for tutorials - <http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

Equipment List

Old car tires

Have a partner hold the tire so that you can practice body blows on it. Make sure to wear MMA or boxing gloves (or similar hand protection). You can also practice front kicks and roundhouse kicks. You can also modify a martial arts striking dummy or makiwara board by adding a car tire to it. 'The Art of Hojo Undo' illustrates a few ideas. Alternative idea - if you can acquire a used truck / tractor tire and a sledgehammer, there are many drills you can use.

Cinder blocks

Curls, presses, plank variations, wide squats, calf raises, lunges, shrugs, single arm rows, swings, farmer's walk, step-ups, and more! For squats, you can also practice assisted one leg squats - step 9 in the squat progression of Convict Conditioning. Instead of using a basketball or similar object, you will use the cinder block for support as you squat down and 'find' the block with your hand. For calf raises, you can practice them standing on the cinder block. You will stand with on the balls of the feet on the edge of the block and lower your heels slowly, with control. Make sure you have a sturdy chair or other piece of furniture, a training partner, or a wall nearby to maintain a safe level of balance. Check out the second Convict Conditioning book for the calf raise progression.

Where to find used tires and cinder blocks?

Many times, auto repair shops will have plenty of old tires lying around they are happy to get rid of. If you're looking for cinder blocks, try the Freecycle Network - <http://www.freecycle.org/> - or ask friends or local businesses. Abandoned buildings will often have old materials lying around, but investigating such buildings can involve legal and safety issues, so exercise discretion.

Rice Bucket

There are wrist strengthening exercises that you can work using a bucket full of rice. Such exercises are common in baseball and physical therapy.

Heavy Bag

Any boxing, MMA, or similar heavy bag, or a heavy bag of your own construction. You can use different materials to both make the bag and fill it to your desired weight. Keep in mind that if you want your own constructed bag to be useful for martial arts practice, that the contents of the bag are not so hard that they do not allow any 'give' or cushion when you strike it. A heavy bag can be suspended by rope or chains. I would recommend visiting a sporting goods store or asking a local boxing, karate or similar instructor for advice on how to hang up bags. The book 'The Art of Hojo Undo' has a section titled 'Other Tools and Methods', which lists small heavy bag.

The use that the book lists is as follows -

'Swinging a bag or ball filled with cement and allowing it to land on various parts of the body, conditions the mind and body to the effects of impact.'

There are many exercises you can practice with heavy bags. These include, but are not limited to, slams, squats, and fireman's carry.

Rope Climbing and Towels for Hang Grip Work

These make great additions to any grip or pullup training. Rope climbing is common in military style workouts. Like many odd object training methods, rope climbing and towel hangs build strength in the hands, wrists, forearms, tendons, and ligaments. Overcoming Gravity, a book I recommended earlier, recommends the use of a towel in its one arm pullup training progression. Also, the second Convict Conditioning book has a progression for hang grip work that includes the use of towels. The two progressions supplement one another very well.

Sandbag training

Sandbags can normally be purchased at a hardware store for a few dollars each, and commonly weight 40 to 45 pounds - making them very cheap lifting implements! You can do almost any type of lift with them, and the fact that the sand shifts around forces you to stabilize the bags, giving you a harder workout. Sandbag training is very useful for firefighters and combat athletes, such as cage fighters and wrestlers. I have personally put sandbags into a duffel bag, which you can normally pick up for \$15 or so at an army surplus. I have written a full article on sandbag training, which is also included in this guide.

My approach to sandbag training is based on the information on the subject in Dinosaur Training. I highly recommend the book for brutally tough, and very effective, strength training!

http://www.brookskubik.com/dinosaur_training.html

For free ideas on how to construct your own sandbags for training, as well as the reasoning behind "odd object training", check out the below article -

<http://www.dieselcrew.com/how-to-odd-object-training>

Some other ideas for strength training without special equipment

Car pushing, chopping wood, using monkey bars or rafters for pullups and various gymnastics exercises, using chairs or picnic tables for 'chair dips' and decline pushups.

The "Strongman (strength athlete)" entry on Wikipedia lists various "odd objects" and more in the "Events" section -

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strongman_\(strength_athlete\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strongman_(strength_athlete))

Hojo Undo / martial arts tools

This is hardly a comprehensive list of implements that martial artists use. I simply want to recommend a few that I personally use when I teach. If you want more ideas on the old school Hojo Undo methods, have a look at the below Wikipedia article on the subject -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hojo_undo

Now, I will list and shortly describe the Hojo Undo implements that I personally teach and work with. If you would like to view a YouTube playlist that demonstrates this style of training, visit the following blog and click on 'Hojo Undo Videos' -

<http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

Lifting Tools of Hojo Undo that I personally use.

Chi ishi - weighted levers or 'strength stones'. A 'chi ishi' is basically a wooden pole with a concrete weights attached.

Makiage kigu - wrist roller. Traditionally, a wooden handle is used, with a weight hanging from it via a length of rope. I personally purchased a modern wrist roller, but the use is the same.

Tan - it is like a modern barbell, and made from a wood post that has concrete weights on each end. I use a steel barbell for the exercises recommended in 'The Art of Hojo Undo.' It is also a good idea to train bojutsu (staff technique) movements with a barbell that is light enough for you to use.

Impact Tools of Hojo Undo that I personally use.

Jari Bako - A bowl or bucket filled with sand, smooth stones, marbles, or even rice or beans. It is used by striking your fingers into it, in order to condition your fingers and fingertips.

Makiwara - a padded striking post traditionally used in some karate styles. I have written up an article about training with the makiwara:

<http://goo.gl/XPOg58>

'Tapping sticks' - almost any piece of wood can be held and used to tap various parts of your body to build a familiarity with getting hit. The point is not to hit yourself as hard as possible, but to slowly build up a tolerance to light striking. I personally use a shinai - a bamboo practice sword used for kendo practice. This kind of tool can be safely used to strike yourself or your training partner moderately hard to the muscles of the legs, arms, and core, but proper cautions must be used.

Owen Johnston - www.oddobjecttraining.com

Alternatives - there are striking bags available for sale that can be filled with dried beans or shot, which can help condition your striking tools. Wall punch pads can also be made or purchased. You can also use thick phone books wrapped up with duct tape as an alternative to makiwara boards. Also, there are plenty of 'ude tanren', or methods of forearm conditioning. This generally consists of partner blocking drills that can be used to toughen up the arms as well as help with reflexes.

My Primary References for this Article

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinosaur_Training

<http://www.dieselcrew.com/how-to-odd-object-training>

<http://goo.gl/IDS7tx>

Also be sure to check out these the page below to look at training equipment that you can order -

<http://atomicathletic.com/store/>